

This week, the new Republican majority in the House of Representatives adopted a new set of rules for the way the House runs – rules which threaten to undermine funding for our nation's critical infrastructure needs.

Under these rules, the new Republican majority will enact a draconian budget without a single hearing, without any input from the Budget Committee, without any outreach to Congressional Democrats, and without a direct vote by the House of Representatives. Merely by entering a statement into the record, the Budget Chairman can subject all spending beyond whatever levels he deems appropriate to a point of order. This level of concentrated authority runs contrary to the premise of transparency that Republicans campaigned on, and, given its disregard for scrutiny, runs the risk of greatly damaging our infrastructure, our economy and the welfare of millions.

The rules themselves make a mockery of prudent budgeting. While the Republican rhetoric has been laudable in some instances, their "Cut-as-you-go" rule is riddled with loopholes. For instance, it allows tax cuts for corporations to be deficit financed, while programs like child tax credits must find offsets. In fact, these rules forbid eliminating even the narrowest special interest tax loophole to find revenue for effective government programs.

The most casual glance at the origin of this country's debts illustrates the fallacy of their approach. These rules make it possible to make permanent the 2001 and 2003 Bush tax cuts for the highest-income taxpayers without finding a dime to offset the cost to our nation. The rules also allow the Republican majority to ignore the cost of repealing the Affordable Care Act, which not only saves nearly \$150 billion during the next 10 years, but reduces healthcare costs by nearly a trillion dollars during the following decades.

In no way do these rules result in the type of prudent budgeting that my Republican colleagues campaigned on, nor does it resemble anything like what any hardworking American family must do. At a time when the Republican majority is pledging greater openness, the rules are also anti-democratic by depriving 600,000 taxpaying D.C. residents of their ability to have their voice heard in the Committee of the Whole.

Most importantly for this outlet, the Rules package undermines opportunities to continue investing in America.

By eliminating the point of order guarding Highway Trust Fund balances this Republican majority threatens investments in communities large and small across the country. Historically, this point of order ensured that Congress delivered on the transportation investments promised in the transportation authorization, and that states and communities could count on the long-term commitments made in that legislation. By removing this point of order, and allowing Highway Trust Fund balances to accrue and mask the actual deficit, the Republicans are engaging in budget gimmickry that undermines our economy and the safety of our communities.

Organizations from the Chamber of Commerce to the American Association of Highway Transportation Officials have expressed their strong concern about destabilizing transportation funding, and have urged the Republican Conference to make changes. I join with these organizations in expressing my concern and disappointment.

At a time when the need to invest in our communities is higher than ever, these rules will make it possible for the Republican Congress to decrease our investment in infrastructure, undermining efforts to rebuild and renew communities across the country. In addition to the new rule regarding the Highway Trust Fund, these Republican rules also limit the ability of the House to raise revenue for the Highway Trust Fund. At a time when our needs are greater than ever, and individuals and organizations across the country are calling on Congress to upgrade our nation's roads, bridges, and transit systems, limiting our options--as these Rules do--is shortsighted and foolhardy.

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